AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A catalyst composition comprising a late transition metal held upon a support, wherein:

the late transition metal is selected from the group consisting of Ru, Co, Ni, Pd, Pt, Cu, Ag and Au, ~~and~~

the support comprises a material of formula $Mo_aW_{2-a}C_bN_{1-b}$ wherein $0<a\leq 2$ and $0\leq b\leq 1$; and

the transition metal is loaded onto the support without exposing the support to air.

2. (original) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the support comprises molybdenum carbide.

3. (original) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the support comprises molybdenum nitride.

4. (original) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the late transition metal comprises platinum.

5. (original) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the late transition metal comprises nickel.

6. (original) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the late transition metal comprises gold.

7. (original) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the catalytic composition comprises 0.1-10 % by weight of the late transition metal.

8. (original) A composition according to claim 7, comprising 0.5-5% by weight of the late transition metal.

9. (original) A composition according to claim 7, comprising 1.0-4% by weight of the late transition metal.

10. (currently amended) A catalyst composition comprising a late transition metal carried on a support, wherein

the transition metal is selected from the group consisting of Ru, Co, Ni, Pd, Pt, Cu, Ag and Au;

the support comprises molybdenum carbide or molybdenum nitride~~,~~; ~~and~~

the catalyst composition comprises 0.1-10% by weight of the transition metal~~.~~; and

the transition metal is loaded on to the support without exposure of the support to air.

11. (original) A composition according to claim 10, wherein the support comprises molybdenum carbide.

12. (original) A composition according to claim 10, wherein the support comprises molybdenum nitride.

13. (original) A composition according to claim 10, wherein the transition metal is selected from the group consisting of platinum, nickel and gold.

14. – 21. (cancelled)

22. (currently amended) A method of preparing a supported transition metal composition comprising the steps of:

bringing ~~a~~ an unpassivated solid group 6 metal carbide or nitride into contact with an aqueous solution of a late transition metal without exposing the group 6 metal carbide or nitride to air to form a system comprising solids and the supernatant;

separating the solids from the supernatant;

drying the solids; and

heating the solids above 200°C to produce a catalyst composition comprising the late transition metal on the group 6 metal carbide or nitride,

wherein the group 6 metal comprises molybdenum or tungsten and the late transition metal comprises Ru, Co, Ni, Pd, Pt, Cu, Ag, or Au.

23. (original) A method according to claim 22, further comprising raising the pH of the supernatant while in contact with the solids.

24. (original) A method according to claim 23, wherein raising the pH of the supernatant comprises adding carbonate salts.

25. (original) A method according to claim 22, wherein the group 6 metal carbide or nitride comprises molybdenum carbide.

26. (original) A method according to claim 22, wherein the late transition metal comprises platinum, nickel or gold.

27. (original) A method according to claim 22, comprising heating the solids above 400°C.

28. (currently amended) A method according to claim 22, further comprising passivating the composition by exposing it to oxygen after the heating step.

29. (currently amended) A method according to claim 22, wherein all of the steps are carried out in the absence of oxygen.